



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

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Office of the  
Assistant Secretary  
for Administration

1400 Independence  
Avenue SW

Washington, DC  
20250-0103

**TO:** Mission Area Personnel Officers  
**FROM:** Roberta D. Purcell *Roberta D Purcell*  
Director  
Office of Human Capital Management

**SUBJECT:** Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program

We are pleased to announce the next U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SES CDP). This 24-month program will begin in the spring of 2007 at American University in Washington, DC. The program is open to all Federal Civil Service employees at the GS 14 and 15 levels. Interested employees must successfully compete in order to attend this program. The nomination period closes on December 8, 2006.

The selected candidates' agencies are responsible for the costs of the course tuition of \$13,125, and assessment fee of \$2,650.

Attached please find the training opportunity announcement and a description of the process that will be used to make the candidate selections. Please ensure this information is disseminated to all staff members.

My points-of-contact for this program are Janet Lynch and Samantha Schmucker, Office of Human Capital Management. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Lynch on (202) 260-4378 or via e-mail at [Janet.Lynch@usda.gov](mailto:Janet.Lynch@usda.gov), or Ms. Schmucker on (202) 720-3263 or via e-mail at [Samantha.Schmucker@usda.gov](mailto:Samantha.Schmucker@usda.gov).

Attachment

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
TRAINING OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT**

**SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE  
CANDIDATE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

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The Department of Agriculture (USDA) will hold a Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SES CDP) beginning in April 2007. This program is designed to provide a series of developmental experiences for individuals with demonstrated potential to successfully complete the program requirements necessary for future key SES positions.

**Training Opportunity Announcement Number:** USDA SES CDP 0307

**Opening Date:** November 6, 2006

**Closing Date:** December 8, 2006

**Applications must be received by the closing date of this notice. Incomplete application packages will not receive further consideration.**

**Who May Participate:** All Federal Civil Service Employees; GS-14/15 or equivalent  
(Participation in this program is on a part-time collateral basis. Candidates are expected to continue in their current positions with appropriate time off to allow for successful program participation.)

**Location:** Most of the program will be conducted at American University in Washington, DC. However, some of the course requirements, such as the developmental assignments and mentoring, may be done at other locations.

Up to 75 positions may be filled for this program.

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**Course Location:** Washington, DC

**Course Dates:** April 2007 – February 2009

**Course Tuition:**

\$13,125 (Tuition includes all instructional services and course materials for attendance at American University ) **Note** - All course and travel fees, developmental assignments, and additional training expenses will be funded by the participants' sponsoring agency. Additionally, there will be a fee of \$2,650 payable to OPM to cover costs for two phases of the assessment process

**About the Program:** The USDA SES CDP is designed to provide a broad range of developmental activities coupled with formal training to enhance individual executive competencies and to increase awareness and understanding of public policy, programs, and issues. Selection into the program is competitive. The application process progresses through 5 phases; each phase asks applicants to demonstrate selected competencies. Only the highest rated applicants from each phase progress to the next selection level.

Candidates who successfully complete the program and receive certification by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) will be eligible for noncompetitive appointment into SES positions for which they are otherwise qualified. However, successful program participation does not guarantee placement in any SES position. USDA applicants must sign an in-service agreement of five (5) years at the commencement of this program, stating that they will remain employed by the Federal government for at least five years from the completion date of this course.

**Note:** For this upcoming SES CDP class, USDA is partnering with **AMERICAN UNIVERSITY!** As part of the overall SES CDP course, participants will be required to attend eight (8) **GRADUATE LEVEL COURSES** of instruction over a **16-MONTH PERIOD**. Courses will be taught by faculty from American University. Those candidates who successfully pass all of the classes will receive 12 graduate level credits, which may be used toward a Master's degree in Public Administration. American University has indicated that the graduate level courses are rigorous.

**Program Requirements:** USDA's 24-month program (**Note** – this length may vary depending on the individual developmental needs and the individual developmental assignment scheduling) integrates the following components:

- ◆ Orientation
- ◆ Individual Needs Assessment/360 Degree Diagnostic Assessment with Coaching
- ◆ Individual Development Plan (Executive Action Plan)
- ◆ SES Mentoring
- ◆ Developmental Assignments (four continuous months in duration)
- ◆ Classroom Training (American University, 12 credits towards a Master's degree)
- ◆ 80 Hours of Interagency Training (dependent upon IDP needs)
- ◆ Reading
- ◆ USDA SES-Led Forum Series
- ◆ Continuous Learning
- ◆ Office of Personnel Management Certification

Although the program will vary for each candidate, the stated structure of tools, resources, activities, and learning events will be available for the candidates. Some of these activities necessarily precede others, as one may be needed for prerequisite learning before being able to fully experience others. Some require actual work experience between learning events so that application and reflection can occur before going on to another assignment.

**Agency Requirement:** USDA participants must sign an in-service agreement for five years at the commencement of the training.

**Selection Criteria:** Applicants will be evaluated primarily on their demonstrated potential to master the five Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs), which are the criteria used by OPM to certify candidates for SES positions. (Detailed information on each of the five ECQs and the competencies can be found at <http://www.opm.gov/ses/ecq.html> )

The ECQs and their associated 28 competencies are:

**ECQ #1 – Leading Change** – This core qualification involves the ability to bring about strategic change, both within and outside the organization, to meet organizational goals. Inherent in this ECQ is the ability to establish an organizational vision and to implement it in a continuous changing environment. Competencies include: **Continual Learning, Creativity and Innovation, External Awareness, Flexibility, Resilience, Service Motivation, Strategic Thinking and Vision.**

**ECQ #2 – Leading People** – This core qualification involves the ability to lead people toward meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals. Inherent in this ECQ is the ability to provide an inclusive workplace that fosters the development of others, facilitates cooperation and teamwork, and supports constructive resolution of conflicts. Competencies include: **Conflict Management, Cultural Awareness, Integrity/Honesty, and Team Building.**

**ECQ #3 – Results Driven** – This core qualification involves the ability to meet organizational goals and customer expectations. Inherent in this ECQ is the ability to make decisions that produce high-quality results by applying technical knowledge, analyzing problems and calculating risks. Competencies include: **Accountability, Customer Service, Decisiveness, Entrepreneurship, Problem Solving, and Technical Credibility.**

**ECQ #4 – Business Acumen** – This core qualification involves the ability to manage human, financial, and information resources strategically. Competencies include: **Financial Management, Human Resource Management, and Technology Management.**

**ECQ #5 – Building Coalitions** – This core qualification involves the ability to build coalitions internally and with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, non-profit and private sector organizations, foreign governments, or international organizations to achieve common goals. Competencies include: **Partnering, Political Savvy, and Influencing/Negotiating.**

**ECQ - Fundamental Competencies** – These competencies are the foundation for success in each of the Executive Core Qualifications. Competencies include: **Interpersonal Skills, Oral Communication, Integrity/Honesty, Written Communication, Continual Learning, and Public Service Motivation.**

**How to Apply?** Interested applicants must submit the following items via e-mail for consideration (incomplete application packages will not receive further consideration):

1. OF 612, "Optional Application for Federal Employment," or Resume
2. SES CDP Applicant Supplementary Statement

**Internal USDA Employee Candidates:** Please e-mail your application materials to your servicing Mission Area Personnel Office by December 8, 2006. Your Mission Area Personnel Officer will review and forward the allotted number of applications to the Office of Human Capital Management, Leadership Development Office.

**External USDA Employee Candidates:** Please e-mail your application materials to either Janet Lynch or Samantha Schmucker at the addresses provided in the contact information. All application material should be submitted as a standard Microsoft word document as an attachment to e-mail. The font size must be 12-point, and font type should be in Times New Roman. External applications are due December 8, 2006 to the Leadership Development Office.

Resume, narrative responses, and assessments from supervisors must be received via e-mail. Please include your full name in the subject line of your e-mail, and include application materials as attachments. Extraneous information not requested in this announcement (for example, cover letters, curriculum vitae, position descriptions, manuscripts, list of publications, award and training certificates, personal endorsements) should not be included. Unsolicited materials will be discarded.

**Evaluation of SES CDP Applicant Supplementary Statements:** Applicants will be evaluated based upon their narrative descriptions including specific examples of your experience, education, training and/or volunteer opportunities, and accomplishments that are applicable to each of the questions and competencies listed below. Written statements should reflect the level of capability in each of the five leadership competencies, emphasizing the quality of accomplishments and the results achieved.

Focus the narrative on **YOUR ACTIONS**. Your accomplishments may focus on a specific incident or on sustained performance over a period of time. If possible, try not to describe one situation more than once.

For each response, please address these items (1) describe the **Situation** – the problem you were trying to solve/the objective you wanted to achieve; (2) describe your **Task(s)** – what were you supposed to do?; (3) describe your **Actions** – what you actually did – the behaviors and actions you used to resolve the situation; and (4) – describe the **Result** – what was the outcome of your efforts?

*Your narrative responses for each question/competency should be limited to 2 pages--your total narrative package may not exceed 12 pages.*

1. **Career Goals** - Describe your short term (1-2 year) and long-term (3 years or more) career goals. (Up to 2 Pages)
2. **Influencing/Negotiating** – Describe how you persuade others; build consensus through give and take; and gain cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals. (Up to 2 pages)
3. **Technical Credibility** – Describe how you understand and appropriately apply principles, procedures, requirements, regulations, and policies related to specialized expertise. (Up to 2 pages)
4. **Creativity and Innovation** – Describe how you develop new insights into situations; question conventional approaches; encourage new ideas and innovations; and design and implement new or cutting edge programs/processes. (Up to 2 pages)
5. **Developing Others** – Describe how you develop the ability of others to perform and contribute to the organization by providing ongoing feedback and by providing opportunities to learn through formal and informal methods. (Up to 2 pages)
6. **Technology Management** – Describe how you keep up-to-date on technological developments; make effective use of technology to achieve results; and ensure access to and security of technology systems. (Up to 2 pages)

**Applicants are responsible for ensuring that materials are received by the appropriate office by 4:30 p.m. on the closing date of this announcement.**

**Candidate Selection:** Selection for the upcoming SES CDP class will embody a five-tier process. For each “tier” in the process, those who have qualified will progress forward to the next phase. Candidates will be notified of their status following the completion of each phase of the selection process.

- Phase I:** Applications will be reviewed for completeness and basic qualifications. Applicants will be notified if they do not qualify.
- Phase II:** A USDA panel will review the applications received. During this phase of the process, the responses to the five competency questions posed in the announcement and written communication will be reviewed and rated against the designated competencies and assigned a score. All applicants will be notified of their status.
- Phase III:** Candidates will undergo structured interviews by a panel from OPM’s Center for Talent Services to determine if they are rated “Best Qualified.” The panel will recommend the top candidates to USDA’s Office of Human Capital Management (OHCM) Leadership Development Office for advancement to the next phase in the assessment process. Candidates who are not selected to progress into Phase IV will receive their numeric scores from the interview phase.

**Phase IV:** Successful candidates will participate in a one-day assessment conducted by OPM's Center for Talent Services. Throughout the day, the candidates will complete a series of assigned tasks, address several scenarios that Federal agencies may encounter, interact with other candidates and/or trained role players, and produce a variety of written products. Exercises are scored by trained experts. A rank ordered listing will be prepared by the OPM Assessment Center and provided to USDA. Every candidate who attends the assessment center will receive a written feedback report.

**Phase V:** Final class selections will be determined in accordance with USDA's succession planning needs. A listing of the selected candidates will be prepared, and the USDA Deputy Secretary will approve the SES CDP recommendations. All applicants will be notified of their status. Those who are selected to participate in the SES CDP will begin their developmental training in the third quarter of FY 2007. Those who are not selected to participate in the SES CDP will be offered feedback reports following participation in the assessment center, and a follow-up workshop to provide guidance and recommendations for strengthening their proficiency in the five ECQs required to become certified in the Senior Executive Service.

**What to Expect Next?** You will be notified of the disposition of your application by e-mail. Therefore, it is important to include a valid e-mail address and provide us with updates as necessary. Applicants who are selected for the program will be notified telephonically. In addition to this telephonic notification, an e-mail will be sent to the agency/office training officer.

**Contact Information:** If you have additional questions about the application process or program requirements, please contact the Office of Human Capital Management, Leadership Development Office:

Janet Lynch  
SES CDP Program Manager  
US Department of Agriculture  
(202) 260-4378 (Voice)  
[janet.lynch@usda.gov](mailto:janet.lynch@usda.gov)

OR

Samantha Schmucker  
Human Resources Specialist  
US Department of Agriculture  
(202) 720-3263 (Voice)  
[samantha.schmucker@usda.gov](mailto:samantha.schmucker@usda.gov)  
[samantha.schmucker@usda.gov](mailto:samantha.schmucker@usda.gov)